

DUTY OF A  
CHRISTIAN  
BUSINESS  
MAN  
BROOKS

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The Duty of the  
Christian  
Business Man

By the Right Rev.  
Phillips  
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Philadelphia  
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## THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.

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I WILL read to you the words of Jesus in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John :

“As He spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man : how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever : but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

I do not know how any man can stand and

#### 4 *THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.*

plead with his brethren for the higher life, that they will enter into and make their own the life of Christ and God, unless he is perpetually conscious that around them with whom he pleads there is the perpetual pleading and the voice of God Himself. Unless a man believes that, everything that he has to say must seem, in the first place, impertinent, and, in the second place, almost absolutely hopeless. Who is man that he shall plead with his fellow-man for the change of a life, for the entrance into a whole new career, for the alteration of a spirit, for the surrounding of himself with a new region in which he has not lived before? But if it be so, that God is pleading with every one of His children to enter into the highest life; if it be so, that God is making His application and His appeal to every soul to know Him, and in Him to know himself, then one may plead with earnestness and plead with great hopefulness before his brethren. And so it is. The great truth of Jesus Christ is that, that God is pleading with every soul, not merely in the words which we hear from one another, not merely in the words which we read from His book, but in every influence of life; and, in those unknown influences which are too subtle for us to understand or perceive, God is forever seeking after the souls of His children.



I cannot stand before you for the last time that I shall stand in these meetings, my friends, without reminding myself and without reminding you of that; without reminding myself also and without trying to remind you of how absolutely conformable it is to everything that man does in this world. The great richness of nature, the great richness of life, comes when we understand that behind every specific action of man there is some one of the more elemental and primary forces of the universe that are always trying to express themselves. There is nothing that man does that finds its beginning within itself, but everything, every work of every trade, of every occupation, is simply the utterance of some one of those great forces which lie behind all life, and in the various ways of the different generations and of the different men are always trying to make their mark upon the world. Behind the power that the man exercises there always lies the great power of life, the continual struggle of nature to write herself in the life and work of man, the power of beauty struggling to manifest itself, the harmony that is always desiring to make itself known. To the merchant there are the great laws of trade, of which his works are but the immediate expression. To the mechanic there are the continual forces of nature, gravitation uttering itself in all its

## 6 *THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.*

majesty, made no less majestic because it simply takes its expression for the moment in some particular exercise of his art. To the ship that sails upon the sea there are the everlasting winds that come out of the treasuries of God and fulfil His purpose in carrying His children to their destination. There is no perfection of the universe and of the special life of man in the universe until it comes to this. The greatest of all forces are ready without condescension, are ready as the true expression of their life, to manifest themselves in the particular activities which we find everywhere, and which are going on everywhere. The little child digs his well in the sea-shore sand, and the great Atlantic, miles deep, miles wide, is stirred all through and through to fill it for him. Shall it not be so then here to-day, and shall it not be the truth, upon which we let our minds especially dwell, and which we keep in our souls all the time that I am speaking and you are listening, that however He may be hidden from our sight God is the ultimate fact and the final purpose and power of the universe, and that everything that man tries to do for his fellow-man is but the expression of that love of God which is everywhere struggling to utter itself in blessing, to give itself away to the soul of every one for whom He cares?

It is in this truth that I find the real secret,

the deepest meaning, of the everlasting dissatisfaction of man that is always ready to be stirred. We moralize, we philosophize about the discontent of man. We give little reasons for it; but the real reason of it all is this, that which everything lying behind it really signifies: that man is greater than his circumstances, and that God is always calling to him to come up to the fullness of his life. Dreadful will be the day when the world becomes contented, when one great universal satisfaction spreads itself over the world. Sad will be the day for every man when he becomes absolutely contented with the life that he is living, with the thoughts that he is thinking, with the deeds that he is doing, when there is not forever beating at the doors of his soul some great desire to do something larger, which he knows that he was meant and made to do because he is the child of God. And there is the real secret of the man's struggle with his sins. It is not simply the hatefulness of the sin, as we have said again and again, but it is the dim perception, the deep suspicion, the real knowledge at the heart of the man, that there is a richer and a sinless region in which it is really meant for him to dwell. Man stands separated from that life of God, as it were, by a great, thick wall, and every effort to put away his sin, to make himself a nobler and a purer man, is

## 8 THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.

simply his beating at the inside of that door which stands between him and the life of God, which he knows that he ought to be living. It is like the prisoner hidden in his cave, who feels through all the thick wall that shuts him out from it the sunlight and the joyous life that is outside, who knows that his imprisonment is not his true condition, and so with every tool that his hands can grasp and with his bleeding hands themselves beats on the stone, that he may find his way out. And the glory and the beauty of it is that while he is beating upon the inside of the wall there is also a noble power praying upon the outside of that wall, The life to which he ought to come is striving in its turn, upon its side, to break away the hindrance that is keeping him from the thing he ought to be, that is keeping him from the life he ought to live. God, with His sunshine and lightning, with the great majestic manifestations of Himself, and with all the peaceful exhibitions of His life, is forever trying, upon His side of the wall, to break away the great barrier that separates the sinner's life from Him. Great is the power, great is the courage of the sinner, when through the thickness of the walls he feels that beating life of God, when he knows that he is not working alone, when he is sure that God is wanting him just as truly, far more truly, than he wants



God. He bears himself to a nobler struggle with his enemy and a more determined effort to break down the resistance that stands between him and the higher life. Our figure is all imperfect, as all our figures are so imperfect, because it seems to be the man all by himself, working by himself, until he shall come forth into the life of God, as if God waited there to receive him when he came forth the freed man, and as if the working of the freedom upon the sinner's side had not something also of the purpose of God within him. God is not merely in the sunshine; God is in the cavern of the man's sin. God is with the sinner wherever he can be. There is no soul so black in its sinfulness, so determined in its defiant obstinacy, that God has abandoned his throne room at the centre of the sinner's life, and every movement is the God movement and every effort is the God force, with which man tries to break forth from his sin and come forth into the full sunlight of a life with God. Do you not think how full of hope it is? Do you not see that when this great conception of the universe, which is Christ's conception, which beamed in every look that He shed upon the world, which was told in every word that He spoke and which was in every movement of His hand — do you not see how, when this great conception of the universe takes possession of a man,

then all his struggle with his sin is changed, it becomes a strong struggle, a glorious struggle. He hears perpetually the voice of Christ, "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. You shall overcome it by the same strength which overcame with Me."

And then another thing. When a man comes forth into the fulness of that life with God, when at last he has entered God's service and the obedience to God's will, and the communion with God's life, then there comes this wonderful thing, there comes the revelation of the man's past. We dare to tell the man that if he enters into the divine life, if he makes himself a servant of God and does God's will out of obedient love, he shall then be strong and wise. One great element of his strength is going to be this: A marvellous revelation that is to come to him of how all his past has been filled with the power of that spirit with which he has at last entered into communion, to which he has at last submitted himself. Man becomes the child of God, becomes the servant of Jesus Christ, and this marvellous revelation amazes him. He sees that back through all the years of his most obstinate and careless life, through all his wilfulness and resistance, through all his profligacy and black sin, God has been with him all the time, beating himself upon his life, showing him how He

desired to call him to Himself, and that the final submission does not win God. It simply submits to the God who has been with the soul all the time. Can there be anything more winning to the soul than that, anything that brings a deeper shame to you, than to have it revealed to you, suddenly or slowly, that from the first day that you came into this world, nay, before your life was an uttered fact in this world, God has been loving you, and seeking you, and planning for you, and making every effort that He could make in consistency with the free will with which He endowed you from the centre of His own life, that you might become His and therefore might become truly yourself? Through all the years in which you were obstinate and rebellious, through all the years in which you defied Him, nay, through the years in which you denied Him and said that He did not exist, He was with you all the time. What shall I say to my friend who is an atheist? Shall I believe that until he comes to a change of his opinions and recognizes that there is indeed a ruling love, a great and fatherly God for all the world, that he has nothing to do with that God? Shall I believe that God has nothing to do with him until he acknowledges God? God would be no God to me if He were that, if He left the man absolutely unhelped until the man beat at the

doors of His divine helpfulness and said, "I believe in Thee at last. Now help me." And to the atheist there appears the light of the God whom he denies. Into every soul, just so far and just so fast as it is possible for that soul to receive it, God beats His life and gives His help. That is what makes a man hopeful of all his fellow-men as he looks around upon them and sees them in all the conditions of their life.

And this could only be if that were true, if that is true, which we are dwelling upon constantly, the absolute naturalness of the Christian life, that it is man's true life, that it is no foreign region into which some man may be transported and where he lives an alien to all his own essential nature and to all the natural habitudes in which he is intending to exist. There are two ideas of religion which always have abounded, and our great hope is, our great assurance for the future of the world is, that the true and pure idea of religion some day shall grow and take possession of the life of man. One idea, held by very earnest people, embodied in very faithful and devoted lives, is the strangeness of religion to the life of man, as if some morning something dropped out of the sky that had had no place upon our earth before, as if there came the summons to man to be something entirely different from what the conditions of his nature proph-



esied and intended that he should be. The other idea is that religion comes by the utterance of God from the heavens, but comes up out of the human life of man; that man is essentially and intrinsically religious; that he does not become something else than man when he becomes the servant of Jesus Christ, but then for the first time he becomes man; that religion is not something that is fastened upon the outside of his life, but is the awakening of the truth inside of his life; the Church is but the true fulfilment of human life and society; heaven is but the New Jerusalem that completes all the old Jerusalem and Londons and Bostons that have been here upon our earth. Man, in the fulfilment of his nature by Jesus Christ, is man—not to be something else, our whole humanity is too dear to us. I will cling to this humanity of man, for I do love it, and I will know nothing else. But when man is bidden to look back into his humanity and see what it means to be a man, that humanity means purity, truthfulness, earnestness, and faithfulness to that God of which humanity is a part, that God which manifested that humanity was a part of it, when the incarnation showed how close the divine and human belonged together—when man hears that voice, I do not know how he can resist, why he shall not lift himself up and say, “Now I can be a man, and I can be man only as

#### 14 *THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.*

I share in and give my obedience to and enter into communion with the life of God," and say to Christ, to Christ the revealer of all this, "Here I am, fulfil my manhood."

And do not you see how immediately this sweeps aside, as one gush of the sunlight sweeps aside the darkness, do not you see how it sweeps aside all the foolish and little things that people are saying? I say to my friend, "Be a Christian." That means to be a full man. And he says to me, "I have not time to be a Christian. I have not room. If my life was not so full. You don't know how hard I work from morning to night. What time is there for me to be a Christian? What time is there, what room is there for Christianity in such a life as mine?" But does not it come to seem to us so strange, so absurd, if it was not so melancholy, that man should say such a thing as that? It is as if the engine had said it had no room for the steam. It is as if the tree had said it had no room for the sap. It is as if the ocean had said it had no room for the tide. It is as if the man said that he had no room for his soul. It is as if life said that it had no time to live, when it is life. It is not something that is added to life. It is life. A man is not living without it. And for a man to say that "I am so full in life that I have no room for life," you see immediately to what absurdity

it reduces itself. And how a man knows what he is called upon by God's voice, speaking to him every hour, speaking to him every moment, speaking to him out of everything, that which the man is called upon to do because it is the man's only life! Therefore time, room, that is what time, that is what room is for — life. Life is the thing we seek, and man finds it in the fulfilment of his life by Jesus Christ.

Now, until we understand this and take it in its richness, all religion seems, becomes to us such a little thing that it is not religion at all. You have got to know that religion, the service of Christ, is not something to be taken in in addition to your life; it is your life. It is not a ribbon that you shall tie in your hat, and go down the street declaring yourself that you have accepted something in addition to the life which your fellow-men are living. It is something which, taken into your heart, shall glow in every action so that your fellow-men shall say, "Lo, how he lives! What new life has come into him?" It is that insistence upon the great essentialness of the religious life, it is the insistence that religion is not a lot of things that a man does, but is a new life that a man lives, uttering itself in new actions because it is the new life. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." So Jesus said to

Nicodemus the ruler, Nicodemus the amateur in religions, who came and said, "Perhaps this teacher has something else that I can bind into my catalogue of truths and hold it." Jesus looked him in the face and said: "It is not that, my friend, it is not that; it is to be a new man, it is to be born again. It is to have the new life, which is the old life, which is the eternal life. So alone does man enter into the kingdom of God." I cannot help believing all the time that if our young men knew this, religion would lift itself up and have a dignity and greatness — not a thing for weak souls, but a thing for the manliest soul. Just because of its manliness it is easy. "Is it easy or is it hard, this religion of yours?" people say to us. I am sure I do not know the easy and the hard things. I cannot tell the difference. What is easier than for a man to breathe? And yet, have you never seen a breathless man, a man in whom the breathing was almost stopped, a drowning man, an exhausted man? have you never seen, when the breath was put once more to his nostrils and brought down once more into his empty lungs, the struggle with which he came back to it? It was the hardest thing for him to do, so much harder for him to live than it was for him to die. But by and by see him on his feet, going about his work, helping his fellow-men, living his life,



rejoicing in his days, guarding against his dangers, full of life. Is life a hard thing for him? You don't talk about its being hard or easy any more than you talk about life itself. The man who lives in God knows no life except the life of God. Let men know that it is not mere trifling, it is not a thing to be dallied with for an instant, it is not a thing for a man to convince himself by an argument, and then keep as if it were locked in a shelf: it is something that is so deep and serious, so deep and serious that when a man has once tested it there is no more chance of his going out of it than there is of his going out of the friendship and the love which holds him with its perpetual expression, with the continued deeper and deeper manifestation of the way in which the living being belongs to him who has a right to his life.

Now in the few moments that remain I want to take it for granted most seriously, most earnestly, that the men who are listening to me are in earnest, and I want to try to tell them as a brother might tell a brother, as I might tell to you or try to tell to you if sitting before my fire-side, I want to try to answer the question which I know is upon your hearts. "What shall I do about this?" I know you say; "Is this all in the clouds? Is there anything I can do in the right way?" If you are in earnest, I shall try

to tell you what I should do, if I were in your place, that I might enter into that life and be the free man that we have tried to describe, of whom we believe certain special and definite things. What are they? In the first place I would put away my sin. There is not a man listening to me now who has not some trick of life, some habit that has possession of him, which he knows is a wrong thing. The very first thing for a man to do is absolutely to set himself against them. If you are foul, stop being licentious, at least stop doing licentious things. If you, in any part of your business, are tricky, and unsound, and unjust, cut that off, no matter what it costs you. There is something clear and definite enough for every man. It is as clear for every man as the sunlight that smites him in his eyes. Stop doing the bad thing which you are doing. It is drawing the bolt away to let whatever mercy may come in come in. Stop doing your sin. You can do that if you will. Stop doing your sin, no matter how mechanical it seems, and then take up your duty, whatever you can do to make the world more bright and good. Do whatever you can to help every struggling soul, to add new strength to any staggering cause, the poor sick man that is by you, the poor wronged man whom you with your influence might vindicate,

the poor boy in your shop that you may set with new hope upon the road of life that is beginning already to look dark to him. I cannot tell you what it is. But you know your duty. No man ever looked for it and did not find it.

And then the third thing—pray. Yes, go to the God whom you but dimly see and pray to Him in the darkness, where He seems to sit. Ask Him, as if He were, that He will give you that which, if He is, must come from Him, can come from Him alone. Pray anxiously. Pray passionately, in the simplest of all words, with the simplest of all thoughts. Pray, the manliest thing that a man can do, the fastening of his life to the eternal, the drinking of his thirsty soul out of the great fountain of life. And pray distinctly. Pray upon your knees. One grows tired sometimes of the free thought, which is yet perfectly true, that a man can pray anywhere and anyhow. But men have found it good to make the whole system pray. Kneel down, and the very bending of these obstinate and unused knees of yours will make the soul kneel down in the humility in which it can be exalted in the sight of God.

And then read your Bible. How cold that sounds! What, read a book to save my soul? Read an old story that my life in these new days shall be regenerated and saved? Yes, do just

## 20 THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.

that, for out of that book, if you read it truly, shall come the divine and human person. If you can read it with your soul as well as with your eyes, there shall come the Christ there walking in Palestine. You shall see Him so much greater than the Palestine in which he walks, that at one word of prayer, as you bend over the illuminated page, there shall lift up that body-being of the Christ, and come down through the centuries and be your helper at your side. So read your Bible.

And then seek the Church — oh, yes, the Church. Do you think, my friends, you who stand outside the Church, and blame her for her inconsistencies, and tell of her shortcomings, and point out the corruptions that are in her history, all that are in her present life to-day — do you really believe that there is an earnest man in the Church that does not know the Church's weaknesses and faults just as well as you do? Do you believe that there is one of us living in the life and heart of the Church who don't think with all his conscience, who don't in every day in deep distress and sorrow know how the Church fails of the great life of the Master, how far she is from being what God meant she should be, what she shall be some day? But all the more I will put my life into that Church, all the more I will drink the strength that she can give to me



and make what humble contribution to her I can bring of the earnestness and faithfulness of my life. Come into the Church of Jesus Christ. There is no other body on the face of the earth that represents what she represents—the noble destiny of the human soul, the great capacity of human faith, the inexhaustible and unutterable love of God, the Christ, who stands to manifest them all.

Now those are the things for a man to do who really cares about all this. Those are the things for an earnest man to do. They have no power in themselves, but they are the opening of the windows. And if that which I believe is true, God is everywhere giving himself to us, the opening of the windows is a signal that we want Him and an invitation that He will be glad enough to answer, to come. Into every window that is open to Him and turned His way, Christ comes, God comes. That is the only story. There is put aside everything else. Election, predestination, they can go where they please. I am sure that God gives Himself to every soul that wants Him and declares its want by the open readiness of the signal which He knows. How did the sun rise on our city this morning? Starting up in the east, the sun came in its majesty into the sky. It smote on the eastward windows, and wherever the window was all

closed, even if it were turned eastward, on the sacred side of the city's life, it could not come in; but wherever any eastward window had its curtains drawn, wherever he who slept had left the blinds shut, so that the sun when it came might find its way into his sleepiness, there the sun came, and with a shout awoke its faithful servant who had believed in him even before he had seen him, and said, "Arise, arise from the dead, and I will give thee life." This is the simplicity of it all, my friends. A multitude of other things you need not trouble yourselves about. I amaze myself when I think how men go asking about the questions of eternal punishment and the duration of man's torment in another life, of what will happen to any man who does not obey Jesus Christ. Oh, my friends, the soul is all wrong when it asks that. Not until the soul says, "What will come if I do obey Jesus Christ?" and opens its glorified vision to see all the great things that are given to the soul that enters into the service of the perfect one, the perfect love, not until then the perfect love, the perfect life, come in. A man may be — I believe it with all my heart — so absolutely wrapped up in the glory of obedience, and the higher life, and the service of Christ, that he never once asks himself, "What will come to me if I do not obey?" any more than your child

asks you what you will do to him if he is not obedient. Every impulse and desire of his life sets toward obedience. And so the soul may have no theory of everlasting or of limited punishment, or of the other life.

Simply now, here, he must have that without which he cannot live, that without which there is no life. Jesus the soul must have, the one yesterday, to-day, and forever; He that is and was and is to be. Men dwell upon what He was, upon what He is; I rather think to-day of what He is to be. And when I see these young men here before me looking to the future and not to the past, — nay, looking to the future and not to the present, valuing the present only as it is the seed ground of the future, the foundation upon which the structure is to rise whose pinnacle shall some day pierce the sky, — I want to tell them of the Jesus that shall be. In fuller comprehension of Him, with deeper understanding of His life, with a more entire impression of what He is and of what He may be to the soul, so men shall understand Him in the days to be, and yet He shall be the same Christ still. The future belongs to Jesus Christ, yes; the same Christ that I believe in and that I call upon you to believe in to-day, but a larger, fuller, more completely comprehended Christ, the Christ that is to be, the same Christ that was and suffered,

## 24 *THE CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MAN.*

the same Christ that is and helps, but the same Christ also who, being forever deeper and deeper and more deeply received into the souls of men, regenerates their institutions, changes their life, opens their capacities, surprises them with themselves, makes the world glorious and joyous every day, because it has become the new incarnation, the new presence of the divine life in the life of man.

Men are talking about the institutions in which you are engaged, my friends, about the business from which you have come here to worship for this little hour. Men are questioning about what they care to do, what they can have to do with Christianity. They are asking everywhere this question: "Is it possible for a man to be engaged in the activities of our modern life and yet to be a Christian? Is it possible for a man to be a broker, a shopkeeper, a lawyer, a mechanic, is it possible for a man to be engaged in a business of to-day, and yet love his God and his fellow-man as himself?" I do not know, I do not know what transformations these dear businesses of yours have got to undergo before they shall be true and ideal homes for the child of God; but I do know that upon Christian merchants and Christian brokers and Christian lawyers and Christian men in business to-day there rests an awful and a beautiful responsibility: to

prove, if you can prove it, that these things are capable of being made divine, to prove that a man can do the work that you have been doing this morning and will do this afternoon, and yet shall love his God and his fellow-man as himself. If he cannot, if he cannot, what business have you to be doing them? If he can, what business have you to be doing them so poorly, so carnally, so unspiritually, that men look on them and shake their heads with doubt? It belongs to Christ in men first to prove that man may be a Christian and yet do business; and, in the second place, to show how a man, as he becomes a greater Christian, shall purify and lift the business that he does and make it the worthy occupation of the Son of God.

What shall be our universal law of life? Can we give it as we draw toward our last moment? I think we can. I want to live, I want to live, if God will give me help, such a life that, if all men in the world were living it, this world would be regenerated and saved. I want to live such a life that, if that life changed into new personal peculiarities as it went to different men, but the same life still, if every man were living it, the millennium would be here; nay, heaven would be here, the universal presence of God. Are you living that life now? Do you want your life multiplied by the thousand mil-



lion so that all men shall be like you, or don't you shudder at the thought, don't you give hope that other men are better than you are? Keep that fear, but only that it may be the food of a diviner hope, that all the world may see in you the thing that man was meant to be, that is, the Christ. Ah, you say, that great world, it is too big; how can I stretch my thought and imagination and conscience to the poor creatures in Africa and everywhere? Then bring it home. Ah, this dear city of ours, this city that we love, this city in which many of us were born, in which all of us are finding the rich and sweet associations of our life, this city, whose very streets we love because they come so close to everything we do and are, cannot we do something for it? Cannot we make its life diviner? Cannot we contribute something that it has not to-day? Cannot you put in it, some little corner of it, a life which others shall see and say, "Ah, that our lives may be like that!" And then the good Boston in which we so rejoice, which we so love, which we would so fain make a part of the kingdom of God, a true city of Jesus Christ, we shall not die without having done something for it.

I linger, and yet I must not linger. Oh, my friends, oh, my fellow-men, it is not very long that we shall be here. It is not very long. This

life for which we are so careful — it is not very long ; and yet it is so long, because, long, long after we have passed away out of men's sight and out of men's memory, the world, with something that we have left upon it, that we have left within it, will be going on still. It is so long because, long after the city and the world have passed away, we shall go on somewhere, somehow, the same beings still, carrying into the depths of eternity something that this world has done for us that no other world could do, something of goodness to get now that will be of value to us a million years hence, that we never could get unless we got it in the short years of this earthly life. Will you know it? Will you let Christ teach it to you? Will you let Christ tell you what is the perfect man? Will you let Him set His simplicity and graciousness close to your life, and will you feel their power? Oh! be brave, be true, be pure, be men, be men in the power of Jesus Christ. May God bless you! May God bless you! Let us pray.



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